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WILDLIFE SERVICES—SOUTH CAROLINA

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in South Carolina

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on South Carolina Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS biologists address serious beaver damage to South Carolina's transportation infrastructure, crops, timber, and natural resources. In addition, WS protects pilots, air passengers, and aircraft from dangerous wildlife collisions with airplanes at civilian airports and military installations.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting transportation infrastructure from beaver damage
- Protecting timber, crops, natural resources, levees, and dams from beaver damage
- Protecting public safety, aircraft, and military operations from wildlife hazards at airports
- Managing problems caused by urban white-tailed deer
- Managing problems caused by vultures

Major WS Research Projects of Interest to South Carolina:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing problems caused by vultures
- Managing bird predation to aquaculture in the Southeastern United States
- Protecting timber and forest resources



While WS conducts a wide range of operational and research activities, a few in-depth examples are provided to highlight WS' role in protecting air travel, preventing beaver damage, and providing assistance with urban white-tailed deer management.

Protecting Transportation, Timber, Crops, and Natural Resources—

WS provides direct assistance in multiple South Carolina counties to remove beavers that cause flooding in timber lands, crop lands, and on roadways. By managing beaver damage, WS saves several million dollars annually in South Carolina resources. These "savings" are measured mostly in terms of losses avoided as a result of managing the damage.

WS provides training to the public for integrated beaver management by participating in workshops around the State and by working with the public on an individual basis.

WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) works to identify new technology to manage beaver damage. Nonlethal damage management methods such as pond levelers and exclusionary devices have been evaluated. Other research includes modifying current equipment so that it is as selective as possible. Greater equipment selectivity reduces the number of times that animals, other than beavers, are impacted by these devices. An otter-proof trigger is an example of these modifications. The trigger allows otters to pass through beaver traps unharmed.

Protecting Air Travel—WS is recognized nationally and internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. NWRC conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop management tools to reduce these hazards, and provide airport personnel with information

to control hazards. WS researchers coauthored a 248-page manual on managing wildlife hazards at airports that is provided to all certified airports in the United States by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the FAA and airports to monitor trends in wildlife species that pose the greatest concern to aviation.

WS has provided consultations to several South Carolina airports to reduce the threat of wildlife strikes. As part of the consultations, WS trained specialists make safety recommendations based on the latest research and train airport personnel in wildlife damage management techniques.

Urban White-tailed Deer Management—As people have developed rural areas, conflicts with white-tailed deer have increased dramatically. Urban sprawl combined with the adaptability of deer, have created conflicts that pose significant challenges. Urban forests and parks provide a sanctuary for deer populations that then move into surrounding neighborhoods. While deer are a very charismatic species and are often held as symbols of harmony with nature, it doesn't take long before residents directly experience the reality of deer overpopulation. The public is concerned because deer destroy residential landscaping, increase the risk of deer/vehicle accidents, and increase the threat of tick-borne diseases being transmitted to pets or people. WS works with communities experiencing deer conflicts to provide residents with information on urban deer management. Recommendations are tailored to meet the concerns of the community.



Looking to the Future

WS provides the citizens of South Carolina with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a diverse range of wildlife conflicts, but the need for support is on-going.

The demand for beaver management has overwhelmed WS, and while the desire to provide services to those in need is great, some counties cannot afford to enter into a cooperative funding agreement with WS to secure beaver management assistance.

The vulture population in the southeastern United States has risen dramatically as well in recent years. This increase has resulted in a sharp rise in the number of requests for assistance that WS receives. A trained bird biologist is needed so that WS can respond effectively to the growing number of vulture issues.

South Carolina Wildlife Services Funding •••••

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

